1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
~~Dhoen Hoon Maria~~

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HILL MARIA YOUTH AND GIRL
(Photograph by Baron E. von Eickstedt

[Facing p. iii]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

PLATE V

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A HILL MARIA, OF THE GOND TYPE
Usendi Muka of Orcha

GROUP OF HILL MARIA GIRLS
(Photograph by Mr. K. L. B. Hamilton, C.I.E., I.C.S.)

[facing p. 62]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Dongar, sleeping the first night at Orcha, twenty-five miles from Kurmer, descending in the morning fourteen miles to Dhaurai, doing their selling and buying and eating a noon meal, and then return that afternoon to sleep again at Orcha, reaching Kurmer on the third day by noon. And their route is no easy one, but up hill and down dale along rough mountain paths. The men will carry heavy loads balanced at either end of a carrying stick borne on their shoulder, proceeding at a jog trot, for nine or ten miles over similar paths, but stop to drink and paddle at the streams, and get very exhausted if they have to carry weights much farther; on the other hand, after food and an hour's rest they are ready to walk back at once to their villages. Three Hill Marias on my last visit to the hills came to my camp at Itulnar some seventy miles across country, with letters, and met me on the march at 8 a.m. in the hills on the third morning after they had set out, having done twelve miles that morning along an exceptionally arduous mountain path. When the crops are ripe on the *penda* slopes and the men are sleeping there, the women go twice a day to them with their food, and sometimes have a heavy day's reaping as well; the *penda* may be five or six miles away from the village and high above it.

Like the Nagas of the Assam hills, the Hill Marias prefer walking over hilly country to long treks on the plains, and are excellent hill and tree climbers. All the Koitor of Bastar, in fact, are remarkably agile tree climbers, and seem to walk up trees rather than climb.

The Bison-horn Maria is even better developed physically than the Hill Maria, and has similar powers of endurance, though on the level plateau villages he does not become the adept hill climber that every Hill Maria is. He leaves less, however, to his women. He can be seen at his physical fittest when dancing for hours with tireless verve and agility, wearing on his head a heavy head-dress of bison-horns with plumes of peacock and jungle-cock feathers and strings of cowries, with a heavy cylindrical drum of hollowed tree-trunk three feet or more long slung from his shoulders, and sometimes carrying a small son frogwise on his chest. He will carry stick-loads of grain sixty or seventy miles to market in the Godavari valley, for even he makes as yet only little use of carts or beasts of burden; the Hill Maria makes none at all.

The Hill Maria wears nothing but a loin-cloth of coarse cotton in winter, summer and rains, though an occasional man may have a piece of similar cloth big enough to wrap over his shoulders at night, and a few headmen have blankets. His body, therefore, is inured to heat and to great cold; for frosts are frequent in his hills, and even as late as the end of March the thermometer may fall to 42°.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

302 and 5 cm. over the ears; this runs right round the head except just below the hair-knot. It is not the natural edge of the hair, as a little is shaved over the centre of the forehead and a good deal over the temples. From a parting (*paya*) just above this the hair is drawn back, like a European's hair brushed straight back from the forehead over the crown, into a top-knot knotted at the back of the head to hang down considerably lower than the Hill Maria crown-tuft knot. The knot is called *kupa-kelk*. The vernacular words used in describing this coiffure are from the Bison-horn dialect used around Aranpur. I have not seen Bison-horn Marias having their hair trimmed; but they say they use razors in the same way as the Hill Marias.

Women's hair is never cut. The hill women all part their hair in front in the centre and bring it back and down over their ears, the whole of which is left visible, into a great pendulous bunch at the back, like bobbed hair, but with the ends not trimmed off but apparently brought over some kind of stuffing and tucked under it. They wear wooden combs made by the young men and often ornamented above the teeth with patterns worked with criss-cross strands of *kosa* silk. These are sometimes as high as Spanish combs, but never as broad. So, too, the man often wears a comb in his crown-tuft. The Bison-horn Maria women do their hair similarly, but frequently wear round the centre of the forehead and the back of the head a horizontal fillet of plain, thin, polished brass about 2 cm. wide, called *utari*, and over this a snood, almost a tiara, of brass, patterned in relief with hammered suns and moons, vertical and oblique hatching lines, saltires, etc., of which the broadest portion fits closely over the skull between the crown and the forehead, the tapering sides descending obliquely over the *utari*, passing behind the ears and ending in cusps which are linked together under the bun. This is called a *talutar*; it, too, is brightly polished. At its greatest width, where it passes over the top of the head, it is 9 or 10 cm. wide. Some women do not wear both *utari* and *talutar*, but either one or the other; the *talutar* can often be seen hung up on the veranda when the woman is busy in the fields; but in the warm spring and hot weather months when you meet bands of women gathering forest fruits, most of them are wearing their *talutar*.

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Before I visited the Abujhmar hills I was regaled with the tale told to Glasfurd in 1862 that many of the Hill Marias wore leaves, being too poor to buy any cloth. It was even then a fable; Glasfurd states that he made enquiries about this and was told by the Marias invariably that they had never seen or heard of any people so poor that they covered themselves with teak leaves; however poor they

Dress and ornaments: (a) Hill Maria

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

might be, they could always obtain a small cloth. Of the men, Glasfurd observed only that they were certainly more scantily clad than any he had hitherto seen; of the women, that their clothing, like that of the men, was scantier than that of other Maria women, consisting only 'of a very small cloth wrapped once round the loins', while 'some of the elder women and children wore only a square patch of cloth, suspended on a cord fastened round the waist, upon which bamboo rings were strung'.

The Hill Marias are now gradually learning to dress in the same fashion as the Jhorias and Murias of Antagarh or the Bison-horn Marias of Dantewara, and are wearing their loin-cloths, turbans and ornaments. But in the villages of the interior, and everywhere among the older inhabitants, the old fashions still survive. The loin-cloth is little more than a length of cloth a foot or fourteen inches broad, twisted or rolled so that it makes a strip round the waist about five inches wide or sometimes much less, passed between the legs tightly, so that in front it seems like a bag for the private parts and that behind it disappears between the buttocks, brought out and wound again round the waist, the end being passed through the waist fold and allowed to hang down over the right buttock; this end is called *toqa* (tail), and in the case of small boys reaches nearly to their ankles, getting shorter as the wearer ages. Above this there should be a girdle of cowry shells, worn so close to the loin-cloth as to be partly concealed by it; but cowries have become unobtainable, now that for forty years or more they have ceased to be currency, and the wearing of the cowry girdle is, as they admit, dying out, though old girdles are jealously preserved. Some wear just a cord instead of the girdle. Glasfurd says that in 1862 Marias sometimes wore, instead of the cowry girdle, a girdle of about ten or fifteen cords of the same form but smaller than those worn then by Gadba women, which he described thus:—

'The girdle is somewhat singular; it is composed of forty to fifty separate cords of about eighteen or twenty inches in length, which are lashed at the ends; it is fastened in front. From the number and size of the cords, this girdle gives the wearer a strange appearance.'

I have not seen anything of this kind among the Hill or Bison-horn Marias of to-day. Sometimes cloth is so short that there is only a cord round the waist supporting a strip of cloth passing between the legs with a flap hanging down over the cord in front and behind. But generally now there is a tendency to widen the loin-cloth, and not to wear much of a *toqa*; it used to fulfil the useful purpose of a bag for receiving grain allotted for food at harvest and feasts, and indeed, the end of the loin-cloth is still so used. The Tokalor clan of Erpanar in Mangnar *pargana* is said to have obtained its

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

name because its founder and members, whenever grain was being ●291 given out, were found always to have extra long tail flaps (here pronounced *toka*) to their loin-cloths. A broader-woven cloth makes it possible for it to be taken once round the waist in its full unfolded width, so as to cover the buttocks and private parts. The *toga* hangs sometimes over the left buttock, and, in the south of the hills, sometimes in front of the body in the Godavari fashion.

Tucked into the girdle or the loin-cloth are knives with or without wooden sheaths, razors (as already seen), hollow bamboo [415] tubes filled with tobacco, or little tobacco boxes of carved wood or tree-seeds, or of basketry (the last kind is sometimes worn on the left shoulder on a cord passing round the neck and under the left arm-pit); a comb may hang over the buttock from a cord; and occasionally on the Dantewara side a larger knife approximating to the *banda* or dao used by the Bison-horn Marias and Parjas.

The older Marias wear no cloth on their heads, and no ornaments in their hair. But it is general now to wear an apology for a *pagri* or turban consisting of one folded Mahra cloth wound round the forehead and tied at the back of the head. Youths wear [301] between this and the back or side of their heads tail feathers of jungle-cock, hornbill or raquet-tailed drongo (which they stick into their crown-tuft knots if they have no *pagri*). This head-cloth is often dirty and worn, and looks suspiciously like all that is left of an old friend of a loin-cloth.

Men and women almost invariably go unshod; but occasionally a pair of very coarse sandals of untanned cowskin with a thong over the big toe and another over the four small toes is worn, generally only when there is a cut or a heel-crack to be protected from the ground.

Short of complete nakedness, man could hardly wear less than the Hill Maria in his most primitive state. His scanty frontal covering often leaves little to the imagination in its utter inadequacy. [164] But it is to the fact that he wears so little that he owes it that he is far freer from scabies, itch and ringworm than the Bison-horn Maria, and the Murias and others of the plains, who more and more are imitating Hindu clothes, but are too poor to afford either much washing or spare suits. At the numerous State dispensaries these are the commonest complaints, and treatment is useless because the patients will not leave off the dirty, infected clothing. Luckily, 292 coat and 'waskat' are still rarities in the hills; Bardal Chamru of Kutul, the headman or *majhi* of Bardal *pargana*, and his brother Bardal Boranga, who used to accompany me when I toured near their villages, always arrived coated and waistcoated above their loin-cloths, but would discard the obnoxious and unnecessary

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Full-face, Jugho Chero, of Itulnar

Hill Maria of Handawada
(*Photograph by Baron E. von Eickstedt*)

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Kutru Mar youths, wearing *tagkali* bark overcoats

[Facing p. 70]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

292 garments as soon as possible. In their youth they had been sent with a party of men and women as exhibits to the Allahabad Exhibition, where Boranga had celebrated his marriage *coram publico Indico*; they brought back with them from Allahabad a bigger suspicion of the *Kosor*, as they, like Gonds all over the Central Provinces, call all Hindus, a coat and waistcoat and blankets, and a taste for *kappu* or opium which luckily was not inherited by Baranga's son, the present headman, or any of the villagers.

● 291 As in Glasfurd's day, the women go with breasts uncovered. Very old women occasionally hobble about inside their huts completely naked. The square patch of cloth suspended between the legs from a waist-cord on which bamboo rings were strung, which Glasfurd saw as the sole garment of some children and elderly women, is the garment known as *mudang*, worn only by females. It is to-day definitely intimate underwear, to be seen by no one save the husband, except in the case of very little girls who, when six or so, wear it for the first time as their only garment. Brass rings made by the Ghasia (Gharwa) brass-workers in bazaar places in the plains such as Gidam, Dhaurai and Narainpur, have replaced the bamboo rings of Glasfurd's time. The cord on which they are strung is sometimes a thin piece of cane. A mother buys a few rings for her little girls whenever she has a pice or two to spare at her visits to the markets; and the cord becomes nearly full of rings when the girl is nubile. The *mudang* cord is never removed, even at child-birth. The cloth attached to it is usually a strip of old rag torn off a worn-out loin-cloth. It has already been stated that women keep it on when bathing. The *mudang* is buried or burned with the woman.

The cord full of rings is obvious under the top of every woman's loin-cloth, as a sort of ridge. The cloth itself is folded over the rings, and hangs down all round over the loins and buttocks, without being passed between the legs. It is therefore not revealing like the men's cloth. Occasionally women wear a small sheet thrown [117] carelessly across the breasts and over the left shoulder in imitation of the custom gradually spreading in the Bison-horn country; and [854] a cloth of this kind is used for supporting a baby, who rides on his mother's right or left hip with the cloth drawn tight over his little buttocks and up to his armpits and thence fastened over her other shoulder. Even for dancing a woman has no other clothes.

301 Glasfurd noted in 1862 that few of the Hill Marias possessed the beads that other Marias liked so much. The older men still wear little of this kind; a few have a single necklet of dirty yellow beads made of small chopped sections of pea-fowl's lower leg-bone about 5 mm. in length. Occasionally

Ornaments

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

keep off the water'.[1] The Maria cloak is made from long, thin strips of the bark of the *wara marra* (*Kydia calycina*); when this bark has been well retted in a stream it is pounded, and the long strips peel off like blades of a broad dry grass. They are gathered round the neck into a close plaited yoke over twine strings used for tying it in front, under the chin, and the ends hang loose. It is known as *tarali* to the Bison-horn Marias, some of the remoter of whom also use it. Besides these, the Hill Maria has a large hat of a very flat conical shape, like the Annamese headgear, made of leaves on a bamboo framework, called *rehing* (it is almost an umbrella, with the head used as the stick, rather than a hat), and a similar leaf waterproof shield called *deda'imo* for his back and shoulders, in shape like an elongated winnowing fan, or an English dustpan, the enclosed end resting on his shoulders. Similar rain-hats and shields are worn by Gonds and others in various parts of the Central Provinces, though the Maria shapes are distinctive.

The account in paragraph 87 of Glasfurd's report obviously refers more to the Marias living 'in the wilder and more unfrequented parts, such as among the valleys of the Baila Deelas and towards the Indrawutty and Kootroo Talook' than to the Bison-horn Marias of the Jagdalpur and Dantewara plateaux; the description which follows the words quoted applies far more to the Hill Maria styles of dress and ornamentation than to those in vogue among the Bison-horn Marias either now, or when the *Gazetteer* was prepared in 1907-9, or at the time of certain earlier photographs taken at the end of the nineties when Colonel Fagan was administering the State. Even so far as Glasfurd's remarks apply to Kutru and the Indrawati valley, they strengthen the contention already advanced in this book of the steady spread of Bison-horn culture among villages in the valley once Hill Maria in culture. He notes, however, that towards Bhopalpatnam and Bijapur the Bison-horn Marias are better clad, but gives no details.

Dress and ornaments: (b) Bison-horn Maria

Their loin-cloth is more ample than that worn in the Abujhmar, and, except when girded up for hunting or work in jungle and field, completely covers their buttocks. It is gathered up into a knot just below the navel, and usually a fold is left, varying in length, to hang down over the piece that has, as with the Hill Marias, been passed tightly over their private parts and between their legs. There is no *toya* or tail behind, consequently, as in the Abujhmar. Towards the Godavari valley the front flap gets very long. The Bison-horn Maria of to-day often wears a mill-made singlet of cotton mesh or gauze, or a '*waskat*', and a coat of some cheap

[1] J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 26.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

●291 cotton material cut in European style; or instead of these has at least an extra round or two of his loin-cloth which he can throw loosely over his shoulder, or a small cotton sheet to answer the same purpose.

The women's loin-cloth is worn like that of their men, but in front is not knotted in such a way as to make a long flap necessary to cover the front of their thighs; it looks, therefore, like a short skirt from their waists to just above their knees. In the fields and jungles and in their own homes they still go with their breasts uncovered save for their masses of ornaments; but they have become somewhat self-conscious, owing to misguided officials suggesting that it was improper for them to appear like this before their Chief or at high officials' camps; and they frequently, when going to a bazaar or festival, or to dance at a wedding or camp, start off with their breasts loosely covered with a cotton sheet or one or two folds of their loin-cloth wrapped loosely from one hip over the opposite shoulder, their beads and finery resting on top of this cloth. Generally, however, the cloth is too small or too loosely thrown over the body really to conceal the breasts. They have this favourite riddle :— [538]

'Bara patte lote kerem honda podo',

meaning, 'What is the pair of bullocks that cannot be confined within the byre of the twelve parts of the body?' to which the answer is '*Dūdo*', or 'Woman's breasts'. They explained this as referring to the refusal of the breasts to be concealed by any wrap. Moreover, as soon as women warm to the dance they rapidly divest themselves of the unwonted wrap.

Most men now wear a *pagri* or turban, tied in the usual fashion of the Hindu population of the adjacent Chhattisgarh districts, and far more ample than the rag worn by the Hill Marias. They do not adorn it with feathers; nor do they wear bead chains or fillets on their heads like the Hill Marias. They use far fewer 301 ornaments; they do not wear the brass wire *maggawadang* rings in 304 the helix of the ear, but sometimes a single small ring like the tasselled ring of the Hill Marias, but worn in a hole in the cartilage near the darwinian tubercle, from which a small gilt chain depends. In the lobe a small ear plug of gold or gilded brass, often with a little red or green stone or glass set in it, may anchor two or three gilt chains fastened at the top to a similar plug vertically above it in the helix. Most men content themselves with one or two small 301 bead necklaces (*mungya*) round their necks, the beads being all of one shape, scarlet or royal blue tubular glass, or pale green humming-top-shaped, both kinds considerably larger than the Hill Marias'

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

PLATE XI

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HILL MARIA WOMEN CARRYING GOURDS OF WATER

HILL MARIA WOMAN CARRYING A LEAF-BOX OF GRAIN

(Photographs by Baron E. von Eichstedt)

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BISON-HORN MARIA VILLAGE STREET, TELAM, NEAR KATAKALIAN

[FACING p. 118]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

PLATE XVIII

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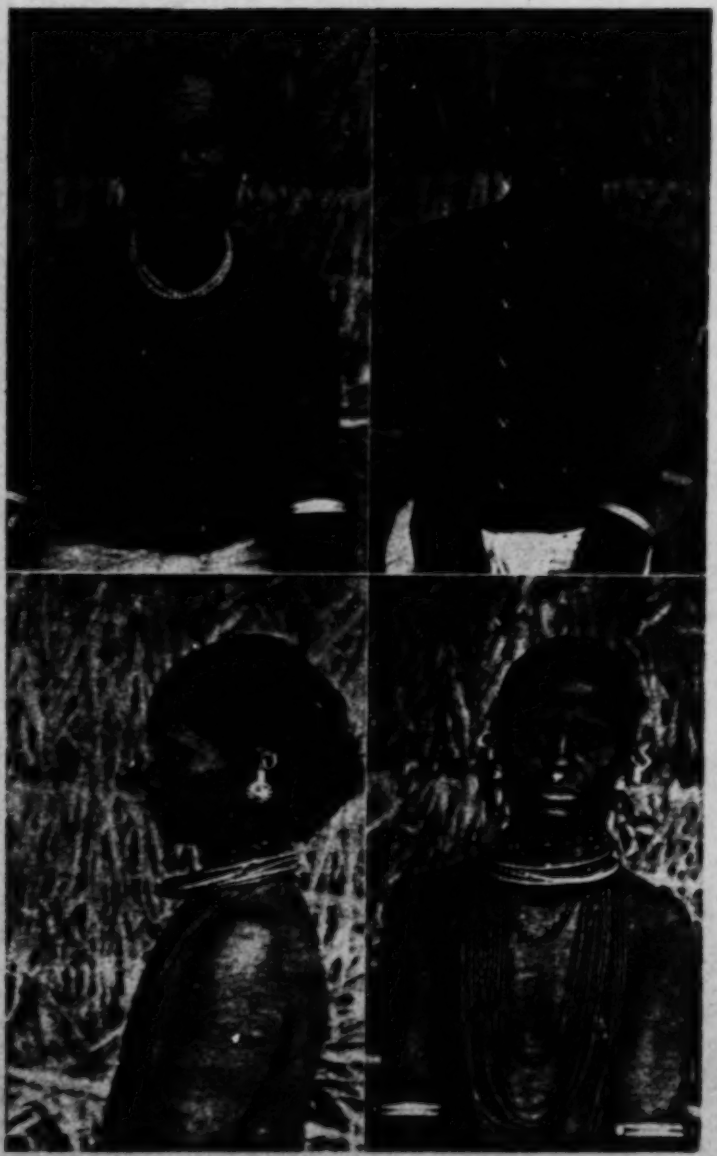

BISON-HORN MARIA TYPES

Above Markami Harma of Burgum Markami Joga, headman of Burgum

Below Mase, wife of Markami Muka of Kakadi

[facing p. 240]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

241 735 economic disaster caused by the arbitrary stopping of their *dahi*, *podu* or *jalapod* cultivation. They said that they did not need this for profit, but to save their lives. 'They urged that if *jalapod* were allowed in a reasonable manner they would always be able to produce enough corn even in years of deficient or irregular rainfall. The men said that in the former days of *jalapod* cultivation they usually cultivated a plot for two years and then left it for five or six years, within which short period *palas*[1] and other forest growth grew high enough for them to cut and burn again."[2]

177 291 Mirkal, Pirmeli and surrounding villages are within the orbit of Allapilli and Ahiri, and the average Maria was clearly exposed to Hindu culture contact, of which the outward sign was the wearing of coats and shorts purchased from Ahiri market or from itinerant Mahar pedlars.

342 The *District Gazetteer* records that the Maria house in the remoter parts of the zamindaris is occasionally very substantial, with walls formed of barked logs laid horizontally and kept in position by upright posts, the interstices being daubed with mud and the whole being thatched with jungle grass.[3] There still are many substantial huts in the villages between Allapilli and Lahiri, but I formed the impression that the standard of housing had deteriorated, possibly because of stricter regulation of felling of trees for domestic purposes.

273 656 405 On the twenty-three miles drive from Pirmeli to Bhamragarh we passed several villages rich in toddy palms, and often saw Marias climbing the tree trunks by rough 'ladders' lashed to the trunks consisting of bamboo stems with the stumps of their side-shoots cut short to act as rungs. The climbers carry, slung round their waist and hanging down like tails, thick bamboo tubes to catch the tapped juice, as described on page 168, sometimes also they take up big gourd bottles. The Provincial Government has for a long time pursued a wiser excise policy in South Chanda than in other tribal areas, of allowing Marias free tree-tapping licences for domestic consumption in certain scheduled villages. The licences are valid for three years and the number of trees that may be tapped is restricted according to the population of the village and the number of trees available for tapping. This applies in much of the Maria country to the *caryotis urens* or sago-palm, the juice of which, as in Bastar, is much preferred to that of the ordinary toddy palm. This privilege had been accorded only to 239 villages of Sironcha tahsil and 58 of Garchiroli tahsil. The selection of villages had been somewhat eclectic; some large villages with only a small Maria or

[1] *Butea frondosa*.
[2] *The Aboriginal Problem*, p. 185.
[3] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 202.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

him his chief impression of Delhi, he spoke of the Kutb Minar, which he told me was almost as fine and tall as the factory chimney of the Allapilli saw-mills! Either at Burgi or the next village another phenomenon was a Maria in a good tweed coat above khaki shorts and stockings with flashes, wearing over all an excellent fawn Curzon topi with a dark brown pugaree, far smarter than I have ever owned. I discovered that his clothes had all been given him by the zamindari of Ahiri, when he had become a member of the Sironcha Independent Local Board. That night, still in his fine feathers, he came to see the dancing in my camp at Surjagarh: but as the drumming swelled and the dances warmed up he found himself unable to keep up the detachment appropriate to his pseudo-*sahib* status, and gradually divested himself of topi, coat, shirt and shoes, finally peeling off his shorts to reveal beneath them the usual abbreviated loin-cloth of the Maria, seizing a drum, and joining in the dance: he was then indistinguishable from any other Maria but for his air of authority as a headman, and his 'undress' was typically Maria, as described in the *Gazetteer*[1]:—

'Their dress is scanty, consisting of a compromise between a *langoti* and a *dhoti*, a strip of cloth wound tightly round the waist in rope-like folds and passed between the legs with the spare end hanging down in front below the knees. Often this garment diminishes to the scantiest rag. They adorn their necks with handsome strings of beads and their arms occasionally with metal and glass bangles. Their ears are pulled out of shape by the weight of numerous brass rings with which they are usually garnished, and occasionally they wear *pagris*.'

This Independent Local Board for the Sironcha taluq consisted then of eighteen members, of whom only six were aboriginals, although there were 3,354 aboriginal to 2,850 non-aboriginal voters. The aboriginal members were almost all returned unopposed, and were *de facto* the nominees of the zamindar, who had had to use his full influence to persuade them to join this peculiar body! It was in the circumstances no surprise discovery that the open, mainly non-aboriginal, country around Sironcha and Ahiri got far more benefit from the Board's expenditure and services than the wild interior of Ahiri zamindari. But the Maria members were utterly illiterate and at sea in the Board meetings. It was the zamindar's influence alone that secured for the Maria areas such services as the Board gave them. Nevertheless, the mere fact that there is an independent local authority for Sironcha tahsil secures that at least this tahsil does get spent on it all that it pays in cesses and other local taxes, and a fair share of Government grants to local bodies, in marked contrast to the fate of the zamindaris of Garchiroli tahsil, who come under the tender mercies of the Chanda District Council

[1] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 99.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Bison-horn Maria girl of Mohlipal

[End Plate 6]

I: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

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Group of Maria girls from Lahiri, Chanda district

W. V. Grigson

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Hill Maria mother and child

Verrier Elwin

[End Plate H]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

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Hill Maria playing stringed instrument

[End Plate ZC]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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The chalk are annual

[frontispiece]

Plate IV

142
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A Muria of Nayanar greets his friends before drinking mahua juice

[p. 12 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Plate V

A study in contrasts. The two boys are brothers, but one goes to school

[p. 18 (a)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate VI

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Nari, the priest and landlord of Nayanar

[p. 18 (8)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Penda is not common among the Muria; it is practised only by those living in the hilly country near the Raughat and in the Abujhmar foothills of the south. *Dippa* and *parka* are the special Muria methods. They are, of course, transitional forms of cultivation from the very primitive *penda* to ordinary plough-agriculture, for they require the use of cattle.

In a *dippa* clearing the trees and bushes are cut in February after the Kare Pandum, when Tallur Muttai is offered a hollow bamboo split down the middle, before which cutting is taboo. The wood is spread over the clearing and left to dry. For *parka*, the wood is cut elsewhere and carried to the field in a shouldered carrying-pole called *asur* or *bhārni*; it is thrown onto the ground and spread fairly evenly across the field.

Before cutting the first *parka*, the Kaser-Gaita spends the night with all the men of the village in the ghotul to ensure that none of them approach their wives who, as menstruating creatures, are always potentially dangerous. He himself cooks and eats apart. In the morning they go to the village shrine and offer sacrifice to all the deities connected with the village, especially remembering Mother Earth and the Departed, saying, 'Let the harvest be good, and let no ill befall us'.

The Gaita then cooks the head of the goat or pig that was sacrificed before the shrine, and small portions are distributed. He sends the chelik to cut the wood. As they first swing their axes they cry *Kiddari pudo*—referring to the genitals of the well-omened kiddari bird. The villagers bring burnt rice, soot from the bottom of their cooking-pots, water and gourds. When the wood has been cut the Gaita says, 'Give the chelik some food', and the villagers smear the boys' faces with soot and force a little burnt rice into their mouths.

FIG. 1. Kuvi digging-stick of iron. *Length 1' 7"*

All are now free to cut the wood for their fields. From this point we may treat the two types of cultivation together. Indeed *dippa* often shades off into *parka*, for where there are not enough trees in a *dippa* clearing, a supplementary supply has to be cut elsewhere and brought as for *parka*.

In some villages there is a ceremonial burning of a small patch of *parka* at the time of the Wijja Pandum; I describe this in detail in Chapter XXIV. In other places, the ritual of the first firing is done at the time just before the rains. The Kaser-Gaita sleeps as usual in the ghotul and then goes with the chelik to his own field. He offers liquor to the local gods, and starts the burning with a smouldering bit of paddy rope taken from the ghotul fire.[1] The other villagers come and all light their own fires from this.

To spread the ashes evenly over the field, the Muria use a long rake called the *korlat* or *balla* (*dhoona* in Halbi). This is simply a very long pole with a board attached to the end. It is, in Muria riddle, 'the snake that wriggles all over the field'. They wear *kurpunj* sandals of sambhar hide or wooden shoes called *katwah* to protect their feet from the hot ground, none the less bearable for the burning sun at the hottest time of the year. The urine turns dark and burns and for a few days the whole tribe endures a sort of urethritis. 'The town people suffer for sex, but we for our field-work', as a man at Phulpar explained.

[1] The Juang keep a fire burning night and day in their *mandagwā* dormitory, and usually ignite their clearings from it.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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Motiari of Munjmeta listening to the gramophone

[p. 30 (N)]

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Chelik of Bayana? digging

Plate XII

The Meliya of Phanda spinning rope

[283]

[p. 44 (B)]

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Two motiari
from Kapsi

Plate XVI

The Pelma of the
Bisonpuri ghotul

[p. 60 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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Making a fishing net

[P. 66 (N)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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The arrow and stone above the pit in which a child's placenta is buried

Plate XXI

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Mother with her two children at Phonda

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

841 Nahani Deo. In some villages, however, the older women do not allow the girl to go to a stream or tank at all. They bring her water and let her bathe and wash her clothes on a stone in the compound.

We can understand how the rules affecting the menstruating motiari must be particularly strict when we remember that the ghotul is a shrine built by Lingo Pen, still sacred to him, and that the children within its walls are not only specially protected from marauding ghost or evil nightmare, but are also subject to the taboos and disciplines of *le monde sacré*. The girl therefore is forbidden for a period varying from four to seven days to enter the ghotul or even touch its fence. She must never, of course, touch a chelik at this time. If she did, they told us at Kajen, he would go mad. Even if her shadow fell on him while he was drinking, he would fall senseless to the ground. Should a girl go into the ghotul concealing her condition, the ashes of the ghotul fire would scatter in all directions and might continue to do so for two or three days, a sure sign that Lingo Pen is offended. When the culprit is discovered, she must offer a bottle of liquor to the insulted deity.

There is naturally considerable risk that a girl may begin her period during the night or evening while she is in the ghotul. A chelik in Munjmeta described what is done. 'She feels the warm blood, she shows it to her chelik and goes away at once.' 'Once', he said, 'his motiari did not realize what had happened and spent the night in the ghotul. When it was discovered in the morning, he himself was fined three long pieces of wood.'

The motiari is not, of course, allowed to go on the Diwali, Chherta and Mahua Dandar excursions while she is in this condition. If the period only begins after she has started out, she must make an offering to the local god and return home. Should any motiari begin her period at the moment when the chelik are about to start for their Pus Kolang dances, they abandon the trip. If during a boy's absence on this expedition his 'ghotul wife' should menstruate, he is warned of the fact by a dream and must make offerings to Lingo Pen. A chelik may go to the ghotul even while his special partner is in her period, but no one may take tobacco from him. The others tease him, saying, 'Don't worry, she'll be all right in two or three days. Perhaps you dug a little too deeply last night'.

If a girl is to be married, and her period begins on the eve of her marriage, this is postponed for a day; then she takes a bath and declares that officially all is well. Once when I went to Borgaon for a wedding, the bride entered her period on the critical day and the ceremony was postponed. On another occasion, when the omens did not come right, the people made a search through the wedding party to see if any relative was concealing this condition.

841 A girl does not bathe her whole body until the flow of blood ceases, but she does change and wash her pubic cloth, though she has to be very careful where 515 she puts it to dry for fear a witch should steal it. This cloth must never be touched by a man. It is either thrown away after every period or hidden in a safe place outside the house. Along the banks of the Boroda river near ● 291 Temrugaon I noticed many earthen pots, some floating in a backwater, others hidden in bushes. These were the pots in which the menstrual cloths were boiled to get them clean.

841 At the end of the period the girl goes as secretly as possible to a stream for her bath. She must be careful not to meet any man on this day, for should 515 his shadow fall upon her, her first child will resemble him. In some villages the girl must take two baths, in others she must take three. After the first bath she cleans and cow-dungs the room where she will sleep, washes all her clothes and sprinkles oil and haldi in the house and on her body. She then

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Motiari attending the bridegroom at Nayanar

[p.102 (A)]

The Hero of the Tarhalli ghotul

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Plate XLI

Two great friends: Pilmi and his Asura at Sidhawand

[p. 204 (1)]

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Plate XLIX

Uraon dhangar

Uraon dhangri

[p. 242 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32

Plate I.

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Irpe, a Hill Maria girl of Bellmori

[p. 242 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Bisonhorn Maria

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Bison-horn Maria girl from Gudra,
Bastar State

[p. 278 (a)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Bison-Horn Maria

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Hirme, a Bison-horn Maria girl washing her hands

Plate LIV

Bison-horn Maria dancers

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria
Oraon AW39

Uraon dhangri

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Plate LXVII

Motiari of Kongera grinding

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[B 330(6)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Phirtu the Chowkidar of the Masora ghotul

Plate LXIX

The ghotul near Malakot

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[p.338 (N)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Chelik of Toinar with his ghotul 'wife'

[p. 364 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

I. Dress and Fashions

THE chelik and motiari, as we have seen, pay a lot of attention to their charming persons, so much attention indeed and of such a varied nature that it is not easy to describe their fashions in a single chapter. But the task is made somewhat easier by the tradition of ghotul solidarity. To be in the fashion, according to Muria ideas, it is essential that all the girls of any one village should look exactly alike. They must have the same coloured cloth round their loins, the same ornaments in their ears, the same bangles on their wrists, the same kind of beads about their necks. The Belosa sets the fashion and all her subjects follow it. There is a little more latitude allowed to boys, especially to the leaders. The Malik of Jungani can wear a wonderful comb fashioned with a chelik and motiari on horseback; the Kotwar of Chandabera can have a tobacco-pouch shaped like a fish in his turban; the Manjhi of Kabonga can go about with a beautifully-carved wooden bird perched on the comb in his hair. But girls cannot do that sort of thing; for them originality is bad taste.

There are five main fashion areas—the villages along the northern border, the Jhoria of the south and centre, the Muria of the north-west near the Abujhmar, the villages round Kondagaon and along the main road and the eastern forest approaching the Jeypore boundary. Each of these areas has its own special style.

There are, however, certain general observations that may be made of Muria everywhere. All Muria wear the same kind of cloth. It is taboo for a Muria to weave, and most of their cloth comes from the local Ganda and Mahara weavers. The cloth is good, but unenterprising, generally plain white with a red stripe or band. The chelik rarely wear a dhoti; all they can usually afford is a loin-cloth tied round the waist, passed between the legs and allowed to hang down in front. Well-to-do boys use a broader cloth that covers the buttocks, but most leave them bare and only conceal the private parts with a narrow strip that forms a sort of bag.

Girls wear a small cloth, supported back and front by their waist-string, to cover the private parts. Over it they wind round the loins a small strip of cloth like a very short skirt, carrying the end up and over one shoulder so as somewhat to conceal the breasts, and tucking it in again behind. In the Jhoria and north-western parganas, both breasts are often left exposed when no stranger is near, and nearly always one breast is visible—a fact that gives point to the riddle: 'The cow-shed is twelve cubits long, yet the two cows can't get inside.'

Muria boys and men usually wear a turban, and this varies not so much from a desire to be in the fashion but according to what one can afford. The classical Muria turban is tied round and round to form a sort of box on the head; in eastern Kondagaon the overhanging flaps are carefully decorated with coloured fringes. This box is rightly so named, for it not only covers the head, but serves as a receptacle for combs, mirrors, leaf-pipes and anything else that a boy may wish to take about.

Neither motiari nor married women cover their heads in conventional village fashion. It is a mark of a Muria girl that her head should be proudly free.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

In the north-west, in the villages of the remote Partabpur and Paralkot areas, where Hill Maria influence is still strong, the chelik of the Paralkot area distinguished two types of necklace: the cat's foot pattern and the rat's foot. (Compare Figs. 71 and 72.) Some of the motiari here wore necklaces usually characteristic of the Hill Maria, with large white beads, and little bells at the end. I have seen motiari with both breasts exposed in Maria fashion, though others have been very fully dressed in smart red saris. Head-bands are not worn, but boys and girls stick flowers and feathers in their hair. The girls usually have few combs.

One may still see necklaces and head-bands of fibre, either sago or date palm, carefully made (Figs. 87 and 88).

To move north from the Jhoria country is to receive an unforgettable impression of drabness. The bright head-bands disappear: the smart tight bead-collars yield to floppy monotonous necklaces. The beads are big, cheap and red; almost everything is bazaar-purchased. One particularly misses the girls' decorations. The Kalpatti, Surebahi, Antagarh and Amabera are the least colourful of all the ghotul parganas. Contact with Chhattisgarhi Gond has ruined their taste and destroyed their artistic enterprise.

FIG. 85. Jhoria head-band of red, blue and white beads

Round Kondagaon and along the main road, the chelik and motiari have a charm of their own, though there is little in their dress or ornament to emphasise it. Both wear a great many necklaces, of red and white beads, getting the effect from quantity rather than from anything artistic in the design. They distinguish the *gir-gatti*, a necklace of small black beads, *moti-mala*, made of white beads, *jug-jugi*, of red and white beads, *jāl-mungiya*, of red beads, *tew-mala*, a decorated neck-band and *kiri*, a thin black necklace.

Occasionally you will see a solitary head-band; girls often have masses of combs.

In the ears, the motiari wear cheap yellow *bisma* from the bazaar, or *dhāl* shields. The boys have little brass rings in the helix.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

301 The cowrie belt is almost unknown, but the chelik carry strings of cowries, bells, beads and tobacco-pouches at the waist.

In this area, the girls have either floppy brass *pairi* slipping down over the heels, or the thick heavy brass *tin-kor* above the ankles.

Finally, in the extreme east of Kondagaon, the chelik recapture something of the aesthetic attractiveness of the Jhoria. Once more elaborate necklaces of small red and blue beads appear; a head-band of cowries and black sago palm fibre is often worn (Fig. 89). The chelik's turban is specially attractive: 291 it is tied straight round into a box with one flap hanging over the top, the other falling behind. The boys themselves attach pretty fringes of pink, mauve and red tassels to these flaps.

For protection against rain, all the Muria make large round hats of leaves placed between a double bamboo framework, and long shields of the same material to hang from their shoulders. In a few villages near the Abujhmar they make the *tarali*-cloak of strips of retted bark characteristic of the Hill Maria.

II. Hair-dressing

302 The hair has the greatest emotional and artistic significance for the Muria. 832 You may have the most beautiful features, the fairest colour, the finest figure, but if the hair is badly dressed you will not be thought attractive.

302 Care of his hair is the first and simplest service that a motiari can render to a chelik; it is during the hair-combing in the evening that friendships become 515 intimate and proposals are made; wherever she is, in camp for a marriage or festival, resting in the heat of the day while working on the roads, or just 524 sitting in the house, a girl takes any chance she can of cleaning a boy's head, and examining it for lice, 'the thousand babies housed in a dry tree', 'the black cows that live in the thick forest, bothering everyone and drinking red water', 'the tigers that breed so quickly in the jungle'. She catches them with the end of her comb, or with her fingers, and kills them with thumb and forefinger. 'Ten went to hunt', says the riddle, 'but two did the killing.'

302 The chelik keep their hair fairly long. A straight fringe is cut across the forehead, and from the parting above it the hair is brushed back and tied in a bun usually covered by the turban. Some of the Muria living under the shadow of the Abujhmar follow the Hill Maria custom of shaving the whole head except for a patch on the crown which is carefully combed back and tied in a knot.

The chelik cut and trim their hair once every month or so, when the motiari who comb it tell them to. They cut and shave each other's heads with small razors made by the village Lohar. The motiari keep their boys closely shaven as to their chins, but they seem to like a good moustache. There is no other reason for shaving: the Muria, except those who have begun to imitate Hindu customs, do not shave at funerals or other religious occasions.

Girls do not cut their hair. They part it down the centre, and very carefully smooth it down and back. Behind the head they wind it over the small wooden blocks called *kunjar halla* (Fig. 91) which are carved for them by the chelik, and tuck it in underneath, fixing it in place with the *kunjar kota*, beautifully made wooden pins (Fig. 90)—also the gifts of chelik—to which are often attached bunches of cowries, coloured wool or strings of beads.

Both boys and girls treat their hair with oil, generally oil specially expressed by a motiari, a mother or sister. Many Muria now carry little bazaar mirrors which they constantly use.

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2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

The Jhoria have the most elaborate hair-ornaments. Bands of beads (Fig. 85) are made by the motiari with great art and taste, and are worn round

FIG. 86. A cowrie belt from the Jhoria area
(See p. 383)

the head by both boys and girls. Thick bands of blue, white and red beads, or three narrower bands, give the children a distinctive and delightful appearance. Sometimes long strings of beads are also wound over and round the turban. Boys and girls alike delight to stick feathers in their hair—feathers of junglecock, peacock, the racket-tailed drongo. Girls often wear tufts of the sago or date palms and any flowers that may be available; they have a special affection for the marigold, which is 'the most beautiful of flowers', and the crimson velvety *siliyâri*.

The motiari in the Jhoria country tie great masses of cowries over the bun into which their hair is tied, mixing them with balls of red, green and blue wool.

There is a pretty game called Atoi-mal-mal Karsana in which the girls stand in a half-circle singing 'Make my hair soft and *mal-mal*'. Each girl in turn goes round the circle smoothing and parting the hair of her fellows.

In the east of the State, in the villages round Ulera, I found many boys using hair-retainers (Fig. 90) made out of old umbrella ribs by the local Muria Lohar.

But, of course, the chief hair-ornament is the comb, a subject of such importance that I describe it in a separate section.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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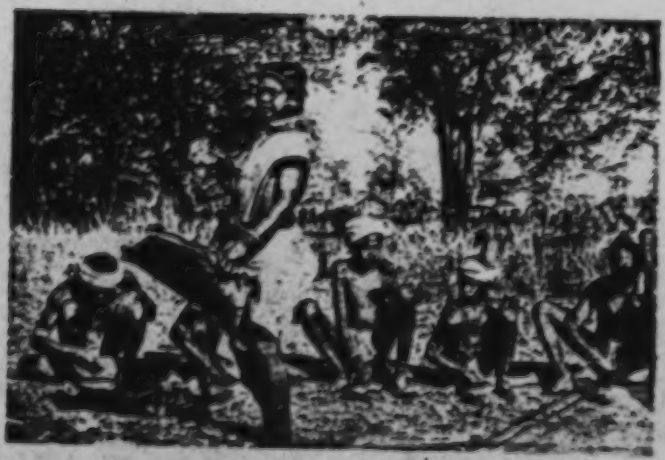
At Kongera a motiari passes on her drink to a chelik

Motiari serving food to the chelik at Nayanar



2. Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Plate LXXVIII

A mother serves the boys

The ghotul Kotwar, son of Nari, serving food at Nayanar

[p. 388 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate LXXX

X 883
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The Malho of the Kolibera ghotul

[1.396(B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate LXXXVI

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Chelik with face decorations

The Likhan of the Tinnur ghotul

[p. 420 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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Motiari of Palli with leaf-cup

Plate LXXXVII

532

Pola festival earthen bullocks put on the road for luck

[p. 428 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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The Nero of Tarbaili with bamboo water-contain

[p. 428(a)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Chelik of Temrugaon wearing typical Hill Maria cap and playing the hunting-horn

Plate CVI

X883
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Chelik panchayat denouncing a would-be reformer

[p. 532(a)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

X 883
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Plate CXII

The Kotwarin of the Kongera ghotul

The Malko of the Markabera ghotul

[p. 554(B)]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

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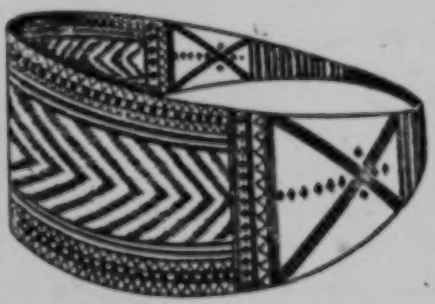
A Sirahu treats his patient at Tikanpal; medical treatment led to several murders

[facing p. iii]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

[64] State Medical Department has done much to check the spread of the disease. Malaria, as everywhere in the Indian forests, is endemic, but few suffer from enlarged spleen. Leprosy and the venereal diseases are very rare. Skin diseases are also much less common than among the more elaborately clothed and thus dirtier people of the north.

● 291 Men wear a small loin-cloth and sometimes a little turban. The women tie a sort of skirt, very short, round their waists: it hangs down to the knees. The breasts are covered only with [632 ornaments; when 301] visiting a bazaar girls may tie a small piece of cloth round their shoulders. They often wear a thin brass fillet round [302] the hair, and the older women use a large snood which is most becoming. Round the neck are masses of bead-necklaces, and iron or brass torcs. The bright colours of the beads and the shining brass fillets against the rich brown skin make a sight of unforgettable beauty.



Brass fillet worn by Maria women

361 The Bison-horn Maria village is laid out on the same lines as the Gond village of the Central Provinces, unlike the communal settlements of the Hill Maria, Baiga or Juang. Each house stands in its own garden which is sometimes a substantial field, and a village may cover a very large area in consequence. Often a village is composed of anything from six to twelve small hamlets, each of which represents the grouping of a family round its patriarchal head. The little huts stand among woods, on rocky hill-sides, in the shade of spreading trees. Sometimes they appear almost submerged [485 by waves of yellow sarson flowers or red jhira vegetable. 373 Each village has a substantial building for the accommodation 361 of travellers and this is used by the unmarried boys as a dormitory. The unmarried girls also sleep together, some-

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

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Girls threshing grain with their feet at Mokhpal

[FACING p. 14]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

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A girl cleans grain in a field at Garmiri; failure in preparing food is sometimes a cause of tragedy

[facing p.20]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

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Bandi of Mokhpal: the typical Maria wife

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Habka Maca, jealous of his wife

[Facing p. 21]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

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Girls fetching water at Bastemar

[Facing p.32]